

#### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A composition and method for treating a wound with an inherently antimicrobial dressing. The dressing is a hydrogel containing from about 15 to 95 percent, and preferably from about 5 61 to 90 percent, by weight of a cationic quaternary amine acrylate polymer prepared by the polymerization of acryloyloxyethyl(or propyl)-trialkyl(or aryl)-substituted ammonium salts or acrylamidoethyl(or propyl)-trialkyl(or aryl)-substituted ammonium salts. The antimicrobial hydrogels are non-10 irritating to the wound, absorb wound exudate, and, due to the inherently antimicrobial properties, enhance the sterile environment around the wound. The hydrogels have sufficient adhesive properties that loose contact with the wound is assured but can also be removed without leaving any gel residue on the 15 wound. The wound dressings are preferably formed on a substrate, such as a web or patch, for ease in application to and removal from the wound. If desired, additional antimicrobial or other pharmaceutically active agents can also be incorporated into the hydrogel structure.